



The United States Department of Justice

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Note: A copy of the indictments can be obtained by clicking on [Perry Osagiede et. al.](#) and [Toritseju Gabriel Otubu](#)

Eight Nigerian Nationals Charged with Conspiring to Engage in Internet Scams and Money Laundering from South Africa

Seven Defendants are Leaders of Cape Town Zone of Neo-Black Movement of Africa, also known as "Black Axe"

NEWARK, N.J. – Seven leaders of the Cape Town Zone of the Neo-Black Movement of Africa, also known as "Black Axe," and an eighth man who conspired with a Black Axe leader, were charged with multiple federal crimes relating to internet scams they perpetrated from South Africa, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig for the District of New Jersey announced today.

Perry Osagiede, aka "Lord Sutan Abubakar de 1st," aka "Rob Nicolella," aka "Alan Salomon," 52; Enorenshe Izevbigie, aka "Richy Izevbigie," aka "Lord Samuel S Nujoma," 45; Franklyn Edosa Osagiede, aka, "Lord Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela," aka, "Edosa Franklyn Osagiede," aka "Dave Hewitt," aka, "Bruce Dupont," 37; Osariemen Eric Clement, aka, "Lord Adekunle Ajasi," aka, "Aiden Wilson," 35; Collins Owhofasa Otughwor, aka, "Lord Jesse Makoko," aka, "Philip Coughlan," 37; and Musa Mudashiru, aka "Lord Oba Akenzua," 33; all originally from Nigeria, are charged by superseding indictment with wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy, spanning from 2011 to 2021. One defendant remains at large.

Perry Osagiede, Franklyn Osagiede, Clement, and Izevbigie are also charged with wire fraud. Perry Osagiede, Franklyn Osagiede, and Otughwor are charged with aggravated identity theft.

Toritseju Gabriel Otubu, aka “Andy Richards,” aka “Ann Petersen,” 41, also originally from Nigeria, is charged by separate indictment with wire fraud conspiracy, wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, and money laundering conspiracy, spanning from 2016 to 2021.

“Americans are too often victimized by criminal organizations located abroad who use the internet to deceive those victims, defraud them of money, and, many times, persuade the victims to wittingly or unwittingly assist in perpetuating the fraudulent schemes,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Honig. “The public should be on guard against schemes like these. And, more importantly, anyone thinking of engaging in this kind of criminal conduct should understand that the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our partners will find them and bring them to justice, no matter where they are.”

“Transnational organized criminal networks continue to victimize U.S. citizens and threaten the financial infrastructure of the United States,” said U.S. Secret Service Office of Investigations Assistant Director Jeremy Sheridan. “The Secret Service, alongside our partner agencies, works tirelessly in its global investigative mission to dismantle these groups and arrest those who lead them. We are proud to be a part of the international law enforcement mission to combat all forms of financial crimes and thank all those involved in this investigation. The U.S. Secret Service extends its gratitude the U.S. Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service for its assistance.”

“Foreign nationals who think they can hide in another country or in cyberspace while preying on our citizens need to know one thing,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr. “The FBI has a global footprint and will use every resource available to protect the American people. The strong working relationship among our federal and international law enforcement partners allows us to reach across geographical boundaries. In other words, anyone who thinks they can avoid American justice simply by operating outside the United States should rethink their strategy.”

According to documents filed in these cases:

Perry Osagiede, Izevbigie, Franklyn Osagiede, Clement, Otughwor, and Mudashiru (the Black Axe defendants) were all leaders of the Neo-Black Movement of Africa, also known as “Black Axe,” an organization headquartered in Benin City, Nigeria, that operates in various countries. The Black Axe is organized into regional chapters known as “zones,” and the defendants were all leaders within the Cape Town, South Africa, Zone. Perry Osagiede founded the Cape Town Zone of Black Axe and worked as its zonal head, along with Izevbigie. The Black Axe defendants and other members of Black Axe took part in, and openly discussed, fraud schemes amongst their membership.

From at least 2011 through 2021, the Black Axe defendants and other conspirators worked together from Cape Town to engage in widespread internet fraud involving romance scams and advance fee schemes. Many of these fraudulent narratives involved claims that an individual was traveling to South Africa for work and needed money or other items of value following a series of unfortunate and unforeseen events, often involving a construction site or problems with a crane. The conspirators used social media websites, online dating websites, and voice

over internet protocol phone numbers to find and talk with victims in the United States, while using a number of aliases.

The conspirators' romance scam victims believed they were in romantic relationships with the person using the alias and, when requested, the victims sent money and items of value overseas, including to South Africa. Sometimes, when victims expressed hesitation in sending money, the conspirators used manipulative tactics to coerce the payments, including by threatening to distribute personally sensitive photographs of the victim.

The conspirators used the bank accounts of victims and individuals with U.S.-based financial accounts to transfer the money to South Africa. On certain occasions, the conspirators convinced victims to open financial accounts in the United States that the conspirators would then be permitted to use themselves. In addition to laundering money derived from romance scams and advance fee schemes, the conspirators also worked to launder money from business email compromise schemes. In addition to their aliases, the conspirators used business entities to conceal and disguise the illegal nature of the funds.

Otubu also engaged in romance scams and used the victims of those scams to obtain money and to launder the proceeds of business email compromises back to South Africa. Otubu conspired with an individual identified in the criminal complaint as Co-conspirator 1, who was a founding member and leader of the Cape Town Zone of Black Axe.

The wire fraud conspiracy and wire fraud charges each carry a maximum term of 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000. The money laundering conspiracy charge carries a maximum term of 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$500,000 or twice the value of the property involved in the transaction, whichever is greatest. The aggravated identity theft charges carry a mandatory term of two years in prison, which must run consecutively to any other term of imprisonment imposed on a defendant.

Seven defendants were arrested in South Africa yesterday by the South African Police Service. Those defendants had their initial appearances in South Africa and are awaiting extradition to the United States on these charges. Both cases are before U.S. District Judge Michael A. Shipp in Trenton federal court.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr. in Newark; and the FBI Legal Attaché Office at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, under the direction of Legal Attaché Jennifer Snell Dent; special agents of the U.S. States Secret Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark McKeivitt in Newark, Special Agent in Charge John Hamby in Seattle, Resident Agent in Charge Michael K. Burgin in the Pretoria Resident Office and Special Agent in Charge Jason Kane of the Criminal Investigative Division, with the investigation leading to the charges.

Acting U.S. Attorney Honig also thanked the South African Directorate of Priority Crime Investigations (DPCI) HAWKS, the South African Police Service, the South African National Prosecuting Authority & Asset Forfeiture Unit, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development for the Republic of South Africa, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs, and INTERPOL for their valuable assistance in this case.

This case is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Priority Transnational Organized Crime (PTOC) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jamie L. Hoxie and Vera Varshavsky of the Cybercrime Unit in Newark.

Anyone who believes they may be a victim may visit <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nj/blackaxe> for information about the case, including a questionnaire for victims to fill out and submit.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictments are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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